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609 mother. The woman who had made Bayo was her sister, she told us.

142 The resemblance between this woman and Bayo was marked. She had the same dark skin, the same stocky, muscular build, the broad nose, the same general cast of features we had known so well in Bayo. Similar, too, were the sharply etched scars on her face, which were so black and so prominent as to bespeak her great vitality and rugged health. There were other likenesses, we learned, and of these the most valued was the strength of their gods.

189 194 562 We had not been long in her hut before we noticed the iron arm-band she wore. It was, we knew, a "*tapu*"—a magical preventive which, in this instance, warned its wearer of danger, and kept her from harm in a combat. Seeing it on the arm of a woman was astonishing for many reasons. Not in all our encounters on the river had we seen a woman wearing an arm obia of iron. Iron was the sign of the Kromanti, a men's group, composed of those men [595] who had the Kromanti spirit. It was in part warriors' secret society, and in part, when it was Obia Kromanti, the men's religious society which controlled the powerful supernatural forces of preventive and healing magic which played so prominent a part in the spiritual life of the Bush Negro. Now there were, we had been told, some women who inherited the Kromanti spirit, but these were few, and not until after their menopause could they enter a Kromanti house, and when this came they were too old to participate in the dance, but they sang the songs when the spirit came to them and did whatever else was known to the initiated of their years.

[853] But this woman who was Bayo's mother's sister was not an old woman. As she talked to us, in fact, her breast was swung over to the side, and against her ribs was the head of the child on her back who was nursing. Yet on her arm was the fighter's "tapu," as the emblem of membership in the Kromanti group.

This was so important an anomaly that, following the etiquette of the bush, we hastened at once to talk about something else.

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"Suma de, ai," he acknowledged.

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Bayo remained in the bush, but he did not come to the city with us, though he took us into the Awka villages as captain of our boat. While at the base camp, he busied himself with making small models of traps and snares, and whatever other examples of Bush Negro work we needed to augment our collection.

He was a poor weaver, for he was no craftsman at all. But on the river he showed almost superhuman strength, and his knowledge of obia and the gods showed his potentialities for achieving what he most desired—to become an obia man. It may well be that his great kunu had planted this ambition in him. Perhaps, if he became a renowned obia man, one of the greatest on the river, he would outwit the combined power of ancestors and gods. His physical strength was such that all seemed possible to him, and his eye was quick, his curiosity unbounded. As a child of incest, a twofold member of his clan, he had certain immunities from the gods, though his line would all the more be flayed by the punishment which his parentage had earned.

"White man," he would say to us, "the next time you come, I will go with you to Africa. By then, I shall have given my wife children, and my sister's children will be grown. I want to go to Africa to learn obia."

His young brother was not strong. Bayo allowed them to cut no kamemba on the boy, who was now almost eleven, and it was clear that he would not be able to go through the Kromanti initiation, that he would have few gods.

"What will you do then, Bayo?"

God alone knew. He did not expect that even in Africa he could learn all he needed to know to help his young brother.

"Would he go with Bibifo?" we ventured, remembering that Bibifo had become Adrian.

He laughed. The white man asked many questions.

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feared by all who themselves do not have Kromanti. Obia Kromanti warns and protects and heals, but its powers are only for those who belong to the Kromanti group.

Whether Kromanti is the African warrior society preserved in this bush, it is impossible to say. If this were the case, then the definite military organization of many of the West African societies should be present. The military character of any group among the Bush Negroes could not even be hinted at, of course, without the greatest caution. In their descriptions of the Kromanti, our intimates among the Bush Negroes never indicated in any way the existence of such an organization. Even leading questions brought out only unqualified denials instead of the revealing answers "I do not know," or "Massa Gadu sabi." Yet there are undoubtedly secrets which Kromanti men do not share with outsiders, and we remembered that when a Kromanti man dies, he must be "separated" from the Kromanti group just as he is "separated" from his family and from his village.

About the very meaning of the word Kromanti there can only be speculation. During the time of the slave trade, there were two ports on the Gold Coast of Africa known as Little and Great Coromantyne. From these ports came the slaves who, in the New World, were known as Coromantyne slaves. These slaves were so warlike, so prone to cause uprisings, that only English and Dutch colonies consented to buy them and in these colonies when slave rebellions broke out to alarm the white planters, they were led by the proud Coromantyne slaves.

It would not be strange, therefore, if the same term was carried over into the free civilization of this bush to typify the obia which protected and watched over the fighters who had won this freedom.

Other indications point to the same assumption. The strongest spirits of the Kromanti, those which inspire the greatest fear when they possess men of a village are Tigri and Djadja. Tigri is the jaguar, Djadja is often vaguely translated by our word "devil." If we again turn to the West African societies, we find that one of the most dreaded

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of the secret societies which flourish there is the Leopard Society, and this African feline is not very different from the one which gives its name to the Tigri obia. Other societies which chastise and protect have often been designated as "devil" societies.

Kromanti is feared, then, because of the kind of preventive it is. The man to whom this obia comes cannot be harmed by bullets shot from guns, by glass, by swords that cut, or by thorns which lacerate. Such a man is protected in combat from the weapons of his enemies and from thorny barricades that might be raised against his attack. It is protection for the warriors, and when it comes, the warriors who have the obia do not hesitate to test their immunity and to try that of others. A friendly, unassertive man seized by the Tiger Kromanti is in the grip of a power which transforms him into a tiger. When obia comes in the sacred dances, it is Kromanti obia. The Bush Negroes do not dance for the healing, protecting spirit that is obia in general. It is too remote. But when they dance and Kromanti comes, the women often flee, and the men who do not have Kromanti discreetly disappear. Only those who have Kromanti have nothing to fear from the attacks of their fellows, for they are protected by the power common to them all—the power of being unharmed by machetes or guns.

What is inside the Kromanti obia houses we cannot say, for we were never permitted to enter them. When we recognized their presence in villages we visited, the fact that they were Kromanti houses was acknowledged, but we were never allowed even to inspect the outside closely, and we were never accorded permission to photograph one of these shrines.

From our informants we learned that inside these houses there are paintings on the walls in black and red, the Kromanti colors, and in the white of the sacred pemba. There were, we were told, whitened benches that had about their tops the grass skirt of a kind worn by the obia man when he danced.

In the Kromanti house, too, was the Kromanti Mama. But until our friend brought us the one he had made for

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us, with its attendant bench and modeled snake, we had only heard the term.

3

In the dim light of our oil lantern, we listened and wrote in our book, while our informant told us about the Kromanti Mama.

"You must take it down carefully," he said, "or it might harm you."

The figure on the top of the bench was named Agbo. This was the watchman, and to this figure came news of all impending evil. About the neck of the figure was a Kromanti fighting obia. A stout iron ring, with red and blue cloth tied about one-half of it, it rested near the base of the watchman.

The eyes of this watchman were its most arresting feature. They were represented by deep sockets, and the effect was heightened by the beak-like character of the nose. Two ears completed the head, and on the body breasts were modeled. It was the only piece of Bush Negro modeling we had ever seen. This most secret of art forms was evidently little practiced.

"The watchman sees all," said our informant, "the Kromanti Mama knows when there is something about that will harm. She tells the snake."

Coiled about its base, this snake was treated in the same realistic style. The head of the snake and its tail almost met at the side of the clay figure which it encircled.

"His name is Bimbawai," we were told.

The bench itself was not unlike the obia stools we had seen in the shrines of the gods. Its rectangular top, curving toward the center, was fastened to the two boards which formed the legs. Like other obia stools, it was difficult to tell whether, under the thick coating of white clay, the wood was carved or not. In one respect it differed from all others we had seen—the bench wore, fringe-like, a grass skirt of the kind worn by the *komfo*, the priests. This was suspended from the top of the bench, the cord going outside

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104 is analogous to the interpolations, "Oh, Lord," "Glory," "Yes, Lord," "Hallelujah," and "Too true," used in Negro churches in this country. These interpolations occur in speech and ceremonies in West Africa, particularly on the Gold Coast.

kerki, church. From the Dutch.

Kesekia, a snake deity. In Togoland this god is known as the wife of one of the sky gods.

keskesi, monkey.

kodjo, cudgel.

kodo, expression of affirmation. It is employed as an interpolation in narrative, and in proceedings at council meetings.

komfo, a person possessed by the spirit of an African diviner. In this sense the word is used in both bush and town. It is [illegible]anti-Fanti origin.

koti-go, cut across.

'kra, soul. This word is that of the Gold Coast, a contraction of *akra*. Saramacca people also drop the "r" and say *ak'a*.

104 515 789 *Kromanti*, the name of a category of amulets which help the fighter, and also, we have strong reason to believe, of a male secret society. The former is known as *Kromanti obia*. The word can be most easily traced to the small kingdom of Coromantyne on the Gold Coast of Africa and to the slave factories in the coastal cities of Little and Great Coromantyne. The origin is often traced also to the Ashanti oath of this name, commemorating a battle in which the Ashanti King Osai Tutu was killed. Everywhere in the New World the Coromantyne Negroes were known as intractable, and it is claimed that they were the instigators of most of the slave rebellions in the New World, especially Jamaica and in the United States. In the Saramacca bush the rôle of the *Kromanti* group is in all respects akin to that of the Asafotche companies on the Gold Coast today. In both instances they are companies of young men—in more ancient times, warriors. In both instances they have magic to help them in war. In both instances this magic includes powers which endow the members with resistance to bullets, and to all things that cut or lacerate, like knives and thorns and glass. In both instances the power comes from the enshrining of magic, in Suriname called *obia*, and on the Gold Coast called *suman*. In some of the old Asafotche songs sung on the Gold Coast the word *Kromanti* appears. The opening of all Asafotche songs with "fire, fire," a euphemism for calling the alarm to indicate the need for all members to gather, is heard in the *Kromanti* songs. The role of the young men of punishing for trespassing against clan or village property, and of watching over the chief's rule, exists in the Saramacca country as it exists on the Gold Coast.

krutu, council, counsel. The Saramacca pronunciation is *k'utu; krutu wosu*, council house.

104 *kuma*, a formal greeting. It is used especially in the Granman's village. The entire interchange when two people of the Saramacca tribe meet follows the West African pattern.

kunu, a supernatural force controlled by the ancestors and gods, which punishes with extinction the families of those who violate the laws of the ancestors. It would seem to be derived from the Ewe (Togoland) word *kunu*, "death."

kwiti-kweti, no, no. A ceremonial interpolation used in council.

kye, exclamation of surprise and entreaty. Sometimes pronounced *ke* and sometimes *tye*. This phonetic shift occurs in Negro speech everywhere in the New

/61/

1937	Mission to determine the trijunction point of the frontiers of French Guiana-Brazil-Surinam.
1939	Declaration of war.
1944-45	Not a precise point of reference. The Boni confuse the liberation of the territory with the end of the war.
1948	First I.G.N. mission.
1949	Mr. Aubert de la Rüe's mission; second I.G.N. mission.
1952	Third I.G.N. mission. /blank page/ /63/

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The social institutions of the Refugee Blacks diverge noticeably from those of the African peoples from whom they issued. They do not include age grades, men's societies, or initiation; marriage involves neither a contract between kin groups nor "dowry."

In a general way these societies founded by rebel slaves who had retained an extreme horror of all oppression were organized so as not to have any material constraint weigh upon the individual. Their institutions are entirely founded on the idea of protection against suprahuman perils; the individual remains perfectly free, and he adheres /to these institutions/ only in proportion as he is conscious of these perils. The custom of the Refugee Blacks, devoid of any means of material coercion, tends to develop within the individual the feeling that he is constantly threatened,

/68 cont./

561 198 The class of the young people, yuŋku sama, has definite activities; "style," that is to say, elegance, dancing, singing; it has a special language made up from taki-taki by inversion or addition of syllables. When the language begins to be known outside the group of young people, it is abandoned and another is invented. These past years the language in vogue was akɔɔpina, of Djuka origin; it had given rise to a whole folklore of songs.

561 Two other age classes appear to be rather clearly differentiated: that of the elders /69/ - gaã sama - (older than some 50 years), whose voices are preponderant in the councils, and that of the old men - gaãndi sama - (older than 65 to 70 years).

[888] It is conceded by all that only the elders possess wisdom and knowledge, and in principle, in a discussion, the opinion of the eldest of them has the force of law.

• 575 Neither does one perceive among the Refugee Blacks any customary societies playing a role comparable to the men's society 571 in the Sudan for example. In a general way their social life, very individualistic in spite of appearances, knows no other organization than the one resulting from kinship ties.

767 Nevertheless, the organization of the men within each village with an eye to the mourning ceremonies can be regarded as a rough approximation to customary societies:

--Kisimã or coffin-makers;

--Olɔma or grave-diggers.

But these societies are narrowly specialized and their customary powers exist only as long as the duration of their effective work.

562 571 Men and women. Even within the lineage where men and women call one another brother, sister, aunt ... the relations between men and women are marked by mistrust.